

# NEWS FROM ED MARKEY

**United States Congress**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**Massachusetts Seventh District**

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## **MARKEY QUESTIONS ADEQUACY OF SECURITY FOR WEAPONS-GRADE PLUTONIUM SHIPMENT**

Washington, DC: Rep. Edward Markey (D-MA), a senior Member of the Homeland Security Committee and the House Energy and Commerce Committee, the panel which oversees nuclear power regulation, today released letters to the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) and the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) regarding an upcoming shipment of 140 kilograms of weapons-grade plutonium from the U.S. to France.

“It appears to me that an attack on the American plutonium that will soon be shipped to France would not pose much of a challenge, since publicly-available materials suggest the trucks previously have been very easily identified, followed and filmed traveling along highways in France, and were only lightly guarded,” said Rep. Markey, adding that “I’m concerned that the Bush Administration isn’t doing enough to ensure that these deadly materials are fully protected against possible terrorist threats”

Despite concerns raised about the apparent inadequacy of security measures for the shipment in France and petitions by several public interest groups, the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) approved the export on June 15, 2004. The NRC took this action without properly noticing the meeting in advance, as is required under NRC regulations. The plutonium shipment is expected to take place in mid-late September.

Rep. Markey’s letters requested information on the following topics related to the upcoming shipment:

- The role the Department of Homeland Security (and specifically the Coast Guard) has played in developing the security plan for the shipment and will play when the shipment takes place.
- The degree to which recent intelligence indicating an impending Al Qaeda attack altered security plans for the shipment.
- Whether the U.S. Government conducted any independent assessments of the security measures planned for France or whether it merely accepted the assurances made by the French Government and other parties.
- Why the NRC failed to follow its own regulations requiring public notice of the meeting at which this shipment was approved.

A copy of Rep. Markey's letters can be found at  
<http://www.house.gov/markey/nucweaponssec.htm>